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Memorandum of Conversation

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Downgraded to SECRET ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~; March 12, 1962  
EO 11652: X055 1-2 (3) 1:00 p.m.

SUBJECT: Germany and Berlin

Authorized by: H. D. C. Soviet Mission,  
August 4, 1975 Geneva, Switzerland

Ver...

PARTICIPANTS: United States

The Secretary  
Mr. Bohlen  
Mr. Kohler  
Ambassador Thompson  
Mr. Akalovsky

USSR  
Mr. Gromyko  
Mr. Semenov  
Mr. Kovalev  
Mr. Bondarenko  
Mr. Sukhodrev

COPIES TO:

S/3 - Mr. Hilsman  
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G - Mr. Johnson  
S/B - Mr. Bohlen  
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INR/D - Mr. Hillenbrand  
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OSD - Mr. McNamara  
Ambassador Moscow - Amb. Thompson  
White House - Mr. Bundy

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Mr. Gromyko hosted a luncheon at the Soviet Mission.

Mr. Gromyko opened the conversation by raising the question of Berlin. He referred to the US view that this question should be discussed here in Geneva, and said that since both sides had this desire, perhaps it would be worthwhile to do so.

The Secretary agreed that this would be useful to discuss this problem. He stated that the United States had reviewed the exchanges of views that had taken place on this subject since last June, some of them at the highest level and some at the diplomatic level, and had attempted to assess the current situation. He said he wished to comment on the more important elements of that situation.

The Secretary expressed regret that it had not been possible to find a way of resolving this problem so as to stabilize the situation and to remove the dangers involved. He expressed the view that it was important to place Berlin in the context of the broader positions of the US and USSR and of their responsibility as great powers. He said he knew that the President and Mr. Khrushchev understood the historical role they were to play and pointed out that the shape of history over the next decade may depend on how they resolve that problem. He recalled the President's conversation with Mr. Khrushchev about the ideological differences between them and their recognition that neither could change the views of the other. He expressed the belief that the

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differences

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differences relating to the internal organization of the two states were not important to their relations. In this connection the Secretary observed that the leader of the USSR of the 1920's would not recognize the USSR of today; nor would the leaders of the US of that period recognize the US of today. Changes had occurred and would occur in both countries and they were not important to their mutual relation. The Secretary observed that the differences in the US and USSR outlook on the development of the international community, referred to by the President in his interview with Adzhubei, were perhaps more troublesome. The United States believed in the development of independent states under the Charter of the United Nations, whereas the USSR seemed to have commitments with regard to revolutionary movements. Even so, this was not fundamental in our problems.

The Secretary expressed the belief that the firmest basis on which the two sides should consider their problems was that of their common interests. Both sides had interests in their security, their future, and the development of the well-being of their peoples. They also had a great deal of unfinished business at home. For its part, the US would be only too glad to turn to those internal tasks. The USSR had also indicated a similar desire. At the same time, if the US and the USSR should turn to the resolution of the problems standing between them, that would bring important change in the international scene. Also, if progress were made in the disarmament field both sides could devote greater resources to their internal economic development. The Secretary stressed that the US had come to Geneva to engage in serious and careful negotiations to make steps in the disarmament field in spite of its disappointing experience over the past 15 years. He expressed the view that unless the US and the USSR succeeded in resolving this problem there would be competition in armaments and an increase in the dangers on the international scene. Although there were some people who apparently did not believe that peaceful coexistence was possible, the Secretary said he held the opposite view. In this connection, he cited the fact that the US and the USSR had lived in peace during a period of over 40 years. ✓

The Secretary recalled Mr. Khrushchev's remark that the Berlin situation had been inherited from the previous governments of the two countries. However, the Secretary said, he did not wish to go into the details of history. What he wished to stress was that both sides should proceed on the basis of their state interests in Central Europe. On that basis, the problem boiled down to "a simple proposition that the USSR had been taking a one-sided approach" when the West wished to take up its rights on land, in the air, and in Berlin on a juridical basis, the USSR said that we should proceed on the basis of facts: on the other hand, when the West cited facts, the USSR

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stated that facts should be changed. The United States did not believe that relations between Great Powers were possible on the basis of such an approach. In fact, if the USSR should press this approach it would not be to its advantage either, because that might lead to a massive rearmament of the West and also give rise to extremist elements in the various countries which might be difficult to handle. Such a situation would require diversion of resources from the peaceful development of our two peoples.

The Secretary went on to say that the United States was aware that the situation in East Germany was not satisfactory from the standpoint of the USSR and the East German authorities. The fact that many people had left East Germany was probably a source of concern both to the USSR and the East German authorities. Thus the USSR appeared to believe that this unstable situation required solution. However, the US did not believe that the USSR had a right to transfer the burden of that situation to the West.

Referring to the US-USSR exchanges of views over the past months, the Secretary wondered whether both sides should not approach the problem on the basis of their total interests and on the basis of the points of agreement and disagreement between them. While the US could not speak for the USSR, it was convinced that both sides had a common interest in peace. If this was not the case, the Secretary observed, then the further remarks he was going to make would be irrelevant.

Noting that he was not suggesting any Western allied positions on any points, although the US was of course aware of the views of its allies, the Secretary stated that, speaking on behalf of the President, he wished to put forward certain thoughts designed to place the situation under control and to put the problem in proper perspective in the context of the broader interests of both sides. He suggested that perhaps an attempt could be made to find certain principles to which both sides could subscribe and a procedure for negotiations on the basis of those principles, and to undertake certain steps while negotiations were proceeding so that there would be no danger of crimes.

Citing Berlin as an example, the Secretary said that both Governments had stated, although in different terms, that West Berlin should be free to choose its own way of life, that its viability should be maintained, and that access to it should be free and unhindered. Perhaps that is a general proposition to which both sides could give their accord. If such a general proposition were agreed, ways could be found of improving the situation in Berlin on the basis of these principles. In the meantime, both sides would also state that existing access procedures would remain in effect.

### The Secretary

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The Secretary then referred to the problem of the diffusion of nuclear weapons and noted that the USSR had apparently expressed an interest in and concern about the US policy with regard to it. The United States, for its part, was also interested in and concerned about the Soviet policy in this respect. The Secretary expressed the belief that both sides had a common interest in not having nuclear weapons pass into the hands of others. He suggested that both sides could perhaps agree that further diffusion of nuclear weapons into the hands of national governments now not owning such weapons would not further the cause of peace. Then, in negotiations, a system providing for non-diffusion of nuclear weapons might be developed to which all states owning nuclear weapons, as well as those now not owning such weapons might subscribe. In the meantime, both sides would declare that they would not themselves relinquish control over any nuclear weapons to any individual state now not owning such weapons and would refrain from assisting any such state in manufacturing such weapons.

As a third example of the suggested approach, the Secretary referred to the problem of non-aggression. He noted that the US and USSR with their respective allies were not in a major confrontation in Central Europe and that it would be tragic if force were used and if uncontrollable events were set in motion. There would be few survivors to conduct a post mortem on our mistakes in dealing with this problem. Therefore, both sides could undertake the commitment not to use force to change the existing frontiers and demarcation lines and not to use force to bring about a change in the status quo. In further negotiations, a declaration by all NATO and Warsaw Pact members might be developed and specific measures by all governments might be considered to establish their non-aggressive intent and to reduce the risk of war by accident or miscalculation. In the meantime, both sides could undertake not to use force to change the existing borders or demarcation lines in Germany and would note with approval West Germany's declaration that it would not use force for those purposes.

Noting that Mr. Gromyko might have some additional points to suggest along the above-mentioned lines, the Secretary said that perhaps he and Mr. Gromyko could find a procedure for reaching agreement on a set of such principles and then heads of government might meet to conclude the agreement. Throughout this process, both sides would of course wish to remain in touch with their respective allies. As to the forum for future negotiations on the basis of those principles, the Secretary suggested that it could perhaps consist of the Deputy Foreign Ministers of the US, the USSR, the UK and France. However, that would be contingent upon substantial agreement in advance and on the absence of actions aggravating the international situation.

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By way of a post script, the Secretary stressed that the United States wished to make very serious progress in the disarmament field and hoped to find ways of managing those serious problems which stood in the way to such progress.

Mr. Gromyko responded by stating that the Soviet Government deeply regretted that no agreement on a German peace treaty had been possible so far. In spite of Soviet efforts to reach agreement with the United States and its allies, the period elapsed had shown that agreement was still far away. He claimed that the reason for this situation lay in the US unwillingness to take into account the existing facts resulting from World War II, and in particular the existence of two sovereign German states. Whether the West liked it or not, the GDR existed, just as the FRD existed. He asserted that the authors of post war agreements could not foresee the situation existing now, since they had proceeded on the premise that there would be one, united, demilitarized, sovereign, and peaceful Germany. The situation was now different, and the world could see that there were two sovereign German states in existence. Mr. Khrushchev had pointed out this fact to the President in Vienna and had stressed that 16 years had passed since World War II and that the situation, which in the absence of a peace treaty had become bad and wrong, could not be left unchanged. This was why the USSR had proposed a two-fold formula for a German peace treaty: either two peace treaties -- one with each of the two Germanies, or a single treaty with both Germanies. Thus, when the USSR referred to a German peace treaty it had in mind these two formulae. Mr. Gromyko contended that the USSR still believed that the best solution would be if agreement were reached with the West to conclude a German peace treaty. However, since the US and its allies had stated that they would not participate in a peace treaty with the GDR, the Soviet Government was prepared to resolve the question on the basis of the USSR's, along with other states that might wish to do so, signing a peace treaty, accompanied by the settlement of a number of other problems, including West Berlin, on the basis of negotiations between the US and the USSR and their respective allies. He recalled his conversation with Ambassador Thompson on this subject in Moscow.

Referring to the general principles mentioned by the Secretary, Mr. Gromyko said they failed to include such an important principle as due respect for the sovereignty of the GDR. He stressed that the Soviet Union would not accept any arrangements infringing upon the sovereignty of the GDR. He said that this meant that the question of communications to West Berlin could be agreed only on the basis of respect for the sovereign rights

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of the GDR, i.e., on the basis of the established international practice with regard to transit by land, air, and water. The question of communications was insolubly linked to the question of the status of West Berlin, a point which the Secretary had failed to mention. The status of West Berlin must be resolved on the basis of a peace treaty, although the US may not take part in such treaty. To the USSR West Berlin was only a part of the German problem, whereas the Secretary's general principles were limited to West Berlin alone. Mr. Gromyko then recalled the Soviet draft on the status of a free city of West Berlin and contended that the USSR did not seek to affect the social order in West Berlin established by the population of that city. He reiterated that two points were missing from the Secretary's list of general principles: (1) respect for the sovereignty of the GDR, and (2) status of West Berlin. He then recalled Mr. Khrushchev's statement that the USSR did not need West Berlin -- not a single acre, or street, or house in West Berlin was needed by the Soviet Union. Nor did the GDR have any need for West Berlin. At the same time, the GDR was making a great concession, even a sacrifice, in agreeing to West Berlin's becoming a free city.

Mr. Gromyko then said that the Soviet Union was prepared to approach the question of a German peace treaty from any end, although it was not prepared to have that question approached in a one-sided manner. The Secretary had mentioned only questions of interest to the US and had failed to mention matters of interest to the USSR and its allies.

As to the substance of the status of a free city in West Berlin, Mr. Gromyko said that the Soviet proposals on this subject were well known and therefore there was no need for repeating them. The Secretary was familiar with the Soviet proposals with regard to the stationing of token contingents of troops in West Berlin and with the different variants of that proposal. The Secretary was also familiar with the Soviet position with regard to the question of access. As to the latter question, the USSR was convinced that the requirements of unrestricted access and of genuine respect for the sovereignty of GDR, a respect that should not be only on paper, could both be satisfied. Mr. Gromyko said that if the West were interested in unrestricted access and if it agreed to respect the sovereignty of the GDR, then the way to agreement was open. Otherwise, if the West were interested in unrestricted access but wished to ignore the sovereignty of the GDR, the way to agreement was closed.

Referring to the Secretary's suggestion with regard to general principles,

Mr. Gromyko

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Mr. Gromyko observed that this was something new, at least in form, and that he did not exclude the possibility of first reaching agreement on a set of general principles, then gradually developing those principles, and ultimately reaching agreement on a detailed basis. However, the interests of all parties concerned must be taken into account in that process, and therefore both sides should jointly consider the situation to develop a mutually acceptable set of principles.

With reference to the Secretary's general remarks, Mr. Gromyko stated that agreement between the US and the USSR would undoubtedly be of tremendous importance to the world situation. The Secretary had mentioned the US allies, but that, of course, was a matter for the United States itself to handle. As for the USSR, it wished to reach agreement. As Mr. Khrushchev had mentioned to the President in Vienna, US and Soviet interests were in direct confrontation only in one place on the international scene. That confrontation was due to the abnormal situation in Germany, which in turn had resulted from the fact that no peace treaty had been concluded so many years after World War II. Therefore, if that question were resolved on a mutually accepted basis, the international situation would be radically improved and the source of friction would disappear. Of course, there remained the disarmament problem. Mr. Gromyko asserted that as far as the USSR was concerned, it had come to Geneva to attempt to resolve that problem. But agreement on the question of a German peace treaty and the settlement of the West Berlin problem on the basis of such a treaty would certainly be of no detriment to the cause of disarmament. However, there must be a desire on the part of all parties concerned to reach agreement. Speeches such as those made by Mr. McNamara and other, even civilian, personalities in the United States brandishing nuclear arms were not conducive to positive results. Methods of threat were now outmoded and could not lead to any results. What both sides must do was seek to bring their respective positions closer together.

Finally, Mr. Gromyko said that the Secretary had correctly interpreted the spirit of the Vienna meeting as regards the lack of desire on either side to convert the other side to its views and ideology. Both sides could live in peace and their desire for peace must unite them in their work, including here in Geneva.

The Secretary said that all of us could remember that the former Germany had made the US and USSR allies, and noted that it would be a pity if the present Germany were to make them enemies. Referring to the fact that both sides had used the term "one-sided", the Secretary wondered whether the gap could be bridged if certain simple ideas were established. Mr. Gromyko had

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mentioned the existence of two Germanies. The United States would certainly not deny that fact, but there were other facts, such as West Berlin, Western presence in West Berlin, and Western access to it. All these were facts as well. As to the question of a peace treaty, the Secretary said that the US was not deeply concerned about the Soviet intention to sign such a treaty, but we were deeply disturbed by what the USSR had stated it intended to do in that connection. The USSR had never disposed of our rights with regard to access and, therefore, it could not transfer them to East Germany. In fact, the Zorin-Bolz letters recognized that in 1955; that exchange of letters also recognized that there were international commitments with respect to Germany. However, since that time Soviet demands appeared to have risen, although there had been no change in the situation. This was what we called one-sided approach. Referring to Mr. Gromyko's contention that the Secretary had failed to take into account Soviet interests, the Secretary stated that we were prepared to talk about all of Germany, all of Berlin, or any aspect of the problem. As to the question of the so-called respect for the sovereignty of the GDR, the Secretary said that he did not believe there was great difficulty on this point, because no one in the West intended to have things happening in the corridors that would interfere with the affairs of East German authorities. On the other hand, the 1955 exchange of letters had not placed access under the GDR sovereignty and it was impossible to see how the USSR could do it now. The Secretary concluded the conversation by reiterating that our problem was not the Soviet intention to sign a peace treaty, but only what such a treaty would do to us.

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